

# Over the Rainbow for Reading



## JB Stephens Elementary is Making it Happen!



**WE ARE** a pre-K through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade 4-star school with an A rating located on the outskirts of Greenfield in Hancock County. As the largest elementary school in the Greenfield-Central School District and with nearly 80 staff members, we are committed to making a difference in our school as well as the community.

**OUR STUDENTS & FAMILIES** are supported by a range of resources and professionals. With over 500 students, we are proud to provide Title 1 services across all grades. Additionally, our early intervention preschool program provides an individualized education plan for each eligible student.

**OUR TEACHERS** are prepared with the knowledge and skills necessary to help each student achieve their personal best. With the support of Special Education and Title teachers as well as certified literacy and language coaches, we ensure that best practices are implemented daily in the classroom.

**OUR PROMISING PRACTICE** Two years ago, we developed a 20-week reading program to spur enthusiasm for books, both in the school and at home. The program was designed to provide a venue for personal achievement as well as classroom and grade-level enthusiasm by involving teachers, parents, and the community in the process. This year, the theme was “Over the Rainbow for Reading”. Students recorded each book read on a paper chain strip, color coded by grade, that were then stapled together and hung in the library windows.

**OUR STEPS** Goals are set. This is done individually and as a school so that students can ‘own’ the experience. How many books can I read in 20 weeks? What can we achieve as we work together? Optimism is contagious! This is where social media steps in... Facebook, Twitter and emails from our principal support family involvement. Teachers encourage silent reading when classwork is complete. Staff are ‘caught’ reading to set an example. The results are tallied weekly and displayed in the library windows. Monthly incentives, such as science experiments and ‘reading forts’ in the library, are offered according to grade level achievements. In the end, our school read over 18,200 books! To celebrate, students and staff came dressed as favorite book characters to follow the completed chain that stretched entirely around the outside of our school, and then some! (And to be photographed for an article in the local newspaper!) Each year, our students experience the strength that comes from personal success and school unity through a love of reading.

### IN OUR OWN WORDS

“At first, I was skeptical of the length, fearing that students would lose interest. But it proved to be an excellent tool for keeping the reading momentum up in my classroom throughout the year.” – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher

“I’m excited to see families get involved. Reading at home makes such a difference for our preschoolers.” – Preschool Teacher